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Kongshøj, Kristian

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# ACCULTURATION AND EXPECTATIONS? *Investigating Differences in Generalised Trust between Non-Western Immigrants and Ethnic Danes*

## Abstract

This article investigates different sources of generalised trust among ethnic Danes and non-Western immigrants together with the gap in trust levels across the two groups. New survey data from Denmark were utilised, and the variables included socioeconomic resources, interethnic contact, perceptions of institutional fairness, timespan in Denmark, national identification and language proficiency. The results showed that interethnic contact and institutional fairness matter less for immigrants than for Danes vis-à-vis trust and that these variables alone do not explain the trust gap. The results also showed that their interactions with ethnicity reduce the trust gap for respondents with little interethnic contact or negative perceptions of institutions. Share of lifespan spent in Denmark also correlated negatively with social trust for immigrants. The results are discussed as the reflection of dynamic acculturation and changing expectations rather than socialisation or distinctly personal experiences.

Kristian Kongshøj

Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies (CCWS), Aalborg University, Denmark

## Keywords

Generalised trust • Non-Western immigrants • Denmark • Institutions • Contact

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## Introduction

Generalised trust in unknown others is associated with economic growth, effective collective decision-making and well-functioning government and also with prosocial behaviour and life satisfaction at the individual level (Fukuyama 1995; Uslaner 2002). This article investigates whether social trust should be explained differently for non-Western immigrants in Denmark than for the ethnic majority and whether we can explain the gap in trust levels between the two groups. The immigrants described in this article originated from Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Ex-Yugoslavia, which are the five biggest non-Western countries of origin in Denmark. Simultaneously, these particular backgrounds are very salient in the public debate on integration and social cohesion. They have predominantly arrived due to asylum or family reunification, and their background is very different vis-à-vis generalised social trust in the home countries.

When explaining trust, a basic theoretical distinction is often drawn between trust as a result of socialisation (particularly early life socialisation), which is prominent in Uslaner (2002, 2008), and trust as a result of more contemporary and personal experiences (Glanville & Paxton 2007; Nannestad et al. 2014; Rothstein & Stolle 2008). This article discusses how it is possible to bridge this apparent theoretical divide with attention to acculturation and expectations and perceptions that are not necessarily rooted in personal experiences.

The literature investigating the association between diversity and social cohesion has proliferated (see Schaeffer 2013; van der Meer and Tolsma 2014 for reviews), and the abovementioned discussion matters in this regard. Ethnic diversity is less of a challenge if differences in the levels of trust between immigrants and the majority population can be explained with more contemporary phenomena (as noted by Nannestad et al. 2014), and the degree to which immigrants exhibit trust in the generalised other tells us something important about social integration.

Empirically, two types of design have dominated the literature. The first explains differences between immigrants either across country contexts or by comparing immigrants from different countries in the same destination country. This approach capitalises on immigration as a natural experiment (Algan & Cahuc 2010; Dinesen 2011; Dinesen & Hooghe 2010; Helliwell, Wang & Xu 2014; Ljunge 2014; Moschion & Tabasso 2014; Nannestad et al. 2014; Shaleva 2015; Uslaner 2008). The second and less-dominant approach is to explain differences between immigrants and the majority population or to compare explanatory factors across the same divide as in Kumlin & Rothstein (2010), Dinesen (2012), de Vroome, Hooghe & Marien (2013) or Koopmans & Veit (2014). The latter type of design also applies to this article. As discussed in the following, these approaches have different strengths and potential pitfalls.

\* E-mail: kongshoj@dps.aau.dk

This article distinguishes itself empirically by being the first to simultaneously show statistical interactions between ethnicity, on the one hand, and both interethnic contact and perceptions of institutions, on the other hand. Specifically, the trust gap is very limited for Danes and immigrants, with little interethnic contact or relatively negative perceptions of institutional fairness, whereas the trust gap is more substantial for other respondents, as these predictors of trust matter more for Danes than for immigrants. Among the limited number of studies considering the role of time, this article is the first to find a negative correlation with generalised trust (possibly due to an arguably more meaningful operationalisation here), meaning that immigrants who have spent more time in Denmark have adjusted their trust levels downwards again. In other words, we are not witnessing a simple, straightforward process of acculturation in which the immigrant minority becomes more like the ethnic majority. Theoretically, the combined findings of this article suggest more clearly than the findings of the previous research that generalised trust among immigrants is largely based on perceptions of, and expectations towards, society in general. However, it will be also discussed how some findings could reflect the potential for improving the individual experiences of non-Western immigrants.

## Theory and literature on generalised trust among immigrants

The theoretical distinction between early life socialisation and more contemporary experiences is common and has gained traction in research examining the generalised trust of immigrants (e.g. Dinesen 2011, 2012; Ljunge 2014; Nannestad *et al.* 2014; Shaleva 2015).

The first and foremost micro-level foundation of 'socialisation' is early life upbringing (often simply referred to as 'culture', even if this is problematic, as culture can be a much broader, difficult, conceptualised phenomenon). The basic idea is that parents, in tandem with other agents of early life socialisation and norms more widely held in society, mould children and their outlook on life, including the propensity to trust unknown others (Uslaner 2002). These orientations are then assumed to provide relatively stable, lifelong blueprints for interactions with (and perceptions of) others.

The experiential perspective emphasises how social trust is continuously open to lifelong adaption in accordance with experiences that either harm or promote generalised trust (Glanville & Paxton 2007). Much of the literature has been preoccupied with political institutions (Dinesen 2011; Kumlin & Rothstein 2010, 2005; Nannestad *et al.* 2014). In this view, institutions enforce rules that affect whether trustworthy behaviour is rewarded. However, they may also act as the conveyors of prevailing norms and general moral standards in society and so affect us through early life socialisation as the guardian of societal norms. Some discussion has been raised concerning the direction of causality between institutional trust and social trust (Robbins 2012). Dinesen & Sønderskov (2014) have utilised Danish panel data, finding that institutional trust affects social trust; however, they found no support for the reverse relationship.

Another often discussed form of 'experience' is interethnic *contact*. Direct personal contact between members of different ethnic groups may reduce distance and prejudice (Stolle, Soroka & Johnston 2008; Tropp & Pettigrew 2005). Conversely, encounters with people very different from ourselves may highlight uncertainties about the trustworthiness of unknown others. This has been labelled as *conflict* theory (Gijssberts, van der Meer & Dagevos 2011; Putnam 2007). Putnam labels his version as *constrict* theory, emphasising

how diversity in neighbourhoods may lead to social isolation. The difference between *constrict* on the one hand and *contact* or *conflict* on the other hand is easier to understand once we consider the difference between *exposure* to ethnic diversity in different contexts (e.g. neighbourhoods, workplaces) and direct personal *contact* (Dinesen & Sønderskov 2015; Koopmans & Veit 2014; Stolle, Soroka & Johnston 2008). *Contact* and *conflict* are arguably more attuned towards different outcomes of interpersonal relations, while *constrict* draws attention to interethnic exposure or more superficial encounters in larger contexts. While this article controls for self-reported neighbourhood composition, the focus is on different outcomes of interpersonal contact for immigrants and ethnic Danes. It is possible to further qualify the mechanisms behind such different outcomes. For interethnic contact to be conducive to trust, it may be necessary that the parties perceive some degree of equal status (Marschall & Stolle 2004; Uslaner 2010). Conversely, contact marred by inequality, power asymmetries or even discrimination may be harmful for trust. Finally, as in the case of institutional trust, it is possible to discuss issues of reverse causality or self-selection. In the US and the UK, Uslaner (2010) found that highly trusting people are more likely to express willingness to move into diverse neighbourhoods. Similarly, we might also expect trusting people to be more willing to engage in personal contact with other ethnicities.

Many studies have distinguished between 'experiences' and 'socialisation' (or 'culture'). Some studies find greater support for Institutional or experiential explanations (Dinesen 2011, 2012; Ljunge 2014; Nannestad *et al.* 2014; Shaleva 2015), whereas other results conform more readily to the importance of 'culture' (or rather socialisation) (Algan & Cahuc 2010; Moschion & Tabasso 2014; Uslaner 2008). Many of these studies find some degree of support for both (for cross-national estimates of both influences, see e.g. Helliwell, Wang & Xu 2014). In other words, we are not necessarily discussing mutually exclusive theories.

Obviously, different results and conclusions might reflect not only different methods but also research designs, as noted in the Introduction. There seems to be little doubt that when immigrants are compared to their countrymen staying behind in the country of origin, the different trust levels of the destination countries are (perhaps unsurprisingly) important when explaining immigrants' trust levels (Dinesen & Hooghe 2010; Helliwell, Wang & Xu 2014; Nannestad *et al.* 2014). Such findings have often been associated with differences in the 'quality' of political institutions, particularly corruption, or other indicators that have been established to correlate with country-level trust. This raises the question of whether such findings reflect a more general perception of, or adaption to, the trust levels of destination countries. As Bauer (2015) discussed, the evidence for the direct influence of individual-level personal experiences seems scarce.

Remember also that the trust levels of non-Western immigrants are still lower than the majority of the population in most Western countries. These differences can be very difficult to 'explain away' when comparing immigrants with the majority population (e.g. de Vroome, Hooghe & Marien 2013; Dinesen 2012; Koopmans & Veit 2014; Kumlin & Rothstein 2010). Conversely, in a survey of schoolchildren in Denmark, Dinesen (2012) reported that young immigrants exhibit trust levels similar to their native peers, and Kumlin & Rothstein (2010) found that native-immigrant differences in trust disappear for the subset of respondents in Sweden who both experience highly fair institutions and have a high degree of interethnic contact.

In short, research in this specific field often uses the theoretical dichotomy outlined earlier, even though findings, when considering

the two major research designs utilised in the literature, do not uniformly support one over the other. However, it is possible to bridge the gap theoretically.

The concept of 'acculturation' is all about how minorities adapt, both individually and collectively, to majorities' values and lifestyles while simultaneously retaining or revising their own 'culture' (Berry 1980, 2001). The influence between majority and minority is reciprocal, but simplified acculturation accounts often discuss whether immigrants simply become more like the ethnic majority. Dinesen & Hooghe (2010) referred to such a process when establishing how immigrants to some extent adapt to new trust levels in different countries. Other studies outside the world of trust have similarly found support for such accounts (for discussion of such literature, see e.g. Breidahl & Larsen 2016). However, Berry (1980) and others have highlighted acculturation strategies in which different aspects of a new culture can consciously be accepted or rejected and that the outcome may even lead to more pronounced differences, hence the famous distinction between assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation.

From the perspective of trust as something much more rational and contemporary, this is not necessarily synonymous with distinctly personal experiences. For instance, the seminal account of trust by Coleman (1990) is one in which rational expectations determine the conscious choice of whether to trust. Coleman begins by explaining how trust often involves a significant time lag; trust relates to the expectation that the trustee will reciprocate at some point in the future. This is most evident in economic transactions, obviously, and Coleman's writing is couched in terms such as risk and information asymmetry or potential gains and losses. However, Coleman also emphasised that norms and other aspects of the 'closeness' of a community affect expectations. If the general impression is that people reciprocate and that both norms and laws are enforced, immigrants may quickly change their decision to trust. Support for such an expectation-based account has often been discussed in research on trust in political institutions, where it is well established how initially high levels of trust among recent immigrants (coming from countries with less open and well-functioning institutions) tend to become more moderate over time (Adman & Strömblad 2015). Rather than more modest expectations such as the old context becoming less salient, however, this could also be discussed as a result of discrimination or other negative 'acculturation' processes. The length of stay in the new country context has been included as a variable in only a few studies of social trust, e.g. de Vroome, Hooghe & Marien (2013) and Dinesen (2010) based on Dutch and Danish data, respectively, but in both cases, it was far from being significant. Koopmans & Veit (2014) included length of stay in the current neighbourhood with German data; although it was significantly and positively associated with trust in neighbours for natives, it was not significant for immigrants.

In short, the distinction between experience vs. socialisation (or 'culture') can be nuanced with perspectives such as acculturation and expectations based on general perceptions of a new context. This is helpful in understanding how trust can change due to more contemporary influences and that this is not limited to individual experiences. The results here will proceed to show how such perspectives appear more fruitful.

## Hypotheses

The analysis is based on three hypotheses. In the literature review and discussion earlier, it was argued that while trust seems to be

adaptable in new circumstances, this does not necessarily reflect personal experiences. Therefore, the hypotheses will be formulated according to what we would expect if trust largely changes according to general perceptions and their resulting expectations, and we will seek to sort out not only personal experiences but also other forms of acculturation.

*H1: Personal experiences, in this case measured chiefly by interethnic contact and perceptions of institutions, are less important for the social trust of non-Western immigrants than that of ethnic Danes.*

Considering an expectation-based account, individual immigrants may be more dependent, relative to the majority population, on general impressions of the host society rather than impressions of fairness towards themselves personally, since the perception of being (considered by the majority) part of a new minority group may be more salient. From the perspective of acculturation, we would agree and stress further that this heightens group identification. Such a hypothesis is also in line with the meta-review of contact effects by Tropp & Pettigrew (2005), who concluded that contact effects generally appear to be weaker for immigrants.

*H2: For immigrants, time spent in the host society correlates negatively with trust, and this effect matters more than measures of acculturation such as national identification and language proficiency.*

Considering immigrants' likely expectations, we would anticipate that newcomers exhibit higher trust levels than those for whom the origin country is less salient and who therefore have adjusted their expectations accordingly. This hypothesis and the theoretical explanation are inspired by the aforementioned studies finding this relationship between time and political trust. They go against the non-significant findings from the more limited number of studies considering time and social trust. However, in the following, I have argued for an operationalisation that is better suited to distinguish relative newcomers from 'veterans' in relation to social trust, one where 'time' is not simply measured in terms of absolute number of years.

Comparing with other measures of acculturation allows us to sort out expectations from acculturation in general more properly than the other hypotheses. As noted earlier, however, these measures can be discussed in that framework and are not mutually exclusive; a confirmative finding could also be interpreted as the result of negative experiences not included in the analysis or as negative acculturation.

*H3: Differences in trust levels between ethnic Danes and immigrants only diminish when taking into account the interaction between ethnicity and experiences such as interethnic contact or institutional fairness.*

If individual experiences matter less for the trust of immigrants, we would not expect to be able to explain much of the trust gap by simply including variables indicating different experiences. Instead, the gap would only diminish when including proper interactions with ethnicity, since the trust gap would then indicate the gap for the subset of respondents with (in our case) very little contact or negative perceptions of institutions.

## Data and method

I employed the survey 'Community conceptions among ethnic and non-ethnic Danes', which was conducted in October and November 2014 by Statistics Denmark. The survey comprised a sample of the general Danish population. For the purposes of this article, second- and first-generation immigrants from around the world have been excluded, which left us with 768 'ethnic Danes' without first- or second-generation status. This also meant that we had no Danes with 'mixed' background (one immigrant parent). The survey also comprised a sample of immigrants with 516 respondents (including 128 second-generation immigrants) from the five major non-Western countries of origin in the Danish immigrant population: Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Ex-Yugoslavia. Both samples only comprised respondents between 18 and 60 years of age. Both survey samples were based on the Danish population register (the CPR register). The register includes all people living in Denmark, including anyone moving to Denmark for more than 3 months. Responses were collected via telephone and Internet.<sup>1</sup> The response rates were respectively 57% (the representative sample, here 'ethnic Danes') and 33% (non-Western immigrants). Both samples were generally representative of the two survey populations in terms of gender, age, household composition, geography and income. Mismatches between survey sample and population were more noticeable as regards education and 'socioeconomic status' (or labour market status). For example, 54% of the immigrant population from these five countries only had basic, school-level education, whereas the figure was 46% in case of the respondents in the survey sample (35% vs. 27% for the sample of the general population). In terms of socioeconomic status, 43% of the immigrant population was neither in employment nor in education, whereas it was only 33% for the survey sample (36% vs. 32% for the representative sample) (Kongshøj 2015). However, both education and socioeconomic status will be controlled for in subsequent regression analyses (along with gender, age and income). However, it should be noted that there was no interpretation or translation. Both the interviewers and respondents themselves were asked to assess proficiency in Danish; both sides indicated proficiency to be somewhere between 'mediocre' or 'very good' in around 95% of the cases, while very few indicated 'bad' or 'very bad'. Therefore, we cannot safely say that the results are also representative of those struggling with the Danish language. As seen below, however, the remaining variation in language proficiency did not indicate a connection between proficiency and social trust.

There are two options for our dependent variable. The first is to use the classic, binary measure of generalised trust: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?' The second option is to use 'To what extent do you generally trust people you meet for the first time?' There are four possible responses ranging from 'trust completely' to 'not at all'. The validity of the first measure as an indicator of generalised trust and its connotations across country contexts has been the subject of some discussion. For instance, Sturgis & Smith (2010) showed that nearly half of all respondents tend to think primarily about known others when answering the question about '... most people'. While the measure is still generally accepted in research investigating generalised trust in the Western context, cross-validation with other measures shows that validity becomes even shakier in many non-Western countries (Delhey, Newton & Welzel 2011; Torpe & Lolle 2011).

This article therefore opts to present results for the variable with the phrasing '... people you meet for the first time', since it is directed

more specifically at unknown others. In this survey, the correlation between the two measures is nearly the same for ethnic Danes and non-Western immigrants (0.41 vs. 0.38, respectively), suggesting that the meaning of the variables does not differ considerably between the two groups in Denmark. The modestly strong correlation for both groups could partly be due to the binary scaling of the classic measure, but it is also questionable whether this variable does indeed tap into particularised trust (known others) more strongly for many respondents.

The following are the independent variables (see Table A1 for specific phrasings and coding): three different variables were included to indicate perceptions of institutions. The first was an index variable based on a three-variable battery measuring the extent to which respondents trust that they will be treated fairly by the public administration, the police and the courts. The value of Cronbach's alpha for this index was 0.84 for Danes and 0.81 for immigrants. The second variable asked how often 'people like you' (rather than just 'you') are treated fairly by public authorities. It might resemble the variables in the index, but the index is stronger (in both survey samples) if this question is kept separate. Furthermore, as seen in the following, keeping this variable distinct produces meaningful results. The third variable indicated the degree to which people are satisfied with democracy.

Interethnic contact was based on a two-variable index: one asking about the frequency of contact in the respondents' own personal home and the other asking about contact in the homes of people with another ethnic background (for immigrants, Danes are mentioned specifically). This should be relatively indicative of 'optimal' contact based on equal status. The two variables correlated very highly in both survey samples.

Three variables had been included as measures of acculturation and expectations. First, degree of national identification with Denmark was a good measure of cultural 'belonging'. Respondents had the option of plainly stating that they did not feel Danish. Second, in line with previous research, language proficiency was seen as another measure of acculturation, as language is to some extent a cultural marker (Adman & Strömblad 2015; de Vroome, Hooghe & Marien 2013). In this case, we should remember that variation in proficiency was predominantly captured in the range from mediocre to very good. Third, time in the new country context was included, even though this indicator (as I will discuss again later) was open to different theoretical interpretations. Unlike the few other studies employing this variable for generalised trust (de Vroome, Hooghe & Marien 2012; Dinesen 2012), the variable in this case had been calculated as the share of lifespan (0–1) spent in Denmark. This is more meaningful and produces results that we would not see if we only had a measure of absolute number of years. It also means that the second-generation and native Danes all score 1. The results reported for this variable would have been the same in a separate analysis of only first-generation immigrants.

Participation in voluntary associations was included. The argument that volunteering is an experience that fosters generalised trust (or conversely that trust promotes volunteering) is well known, although the evidence might be limited at the individual level (Hooghe 2008; Rothstein & Uslaner 2005).

A self-reported measure of ethnic diversity in the neighbourhood was employed. This measure indicates the perceived exposure to other ethnicities but not interethnic contact (as discussed previously regarding the difference between exposure and contact).

Finally, the sociodemographic and socioeconomic control variables included age, gender, personal income and education.



Marital status was also included. Socioeconomic resources can be important for individual experiences and/or individual dispositions (depending on theoretical outlook) and might therefore affect social trust (Delhey & Newton 2003; Freitag & Trauttmüller 2009). A variable on ideological self-placement on a left–right scale was also included. Descriptive statistics for all variables can be found in Table A2.

The statistical models employed linear regression with robust standard errors (accounting for heteroscedasticity). Both standardised and unstandardised coefficients are reported in order to better facilitate between- and within-model comparisons.

## Results

As expected, there is a significant difference between the two groups. Among the ethnic Danes, 66.8% indicated somewhat or completely trusting people they meet for the first time, whereas the same figure was only 29.4% for the non-Western immigrants. Interestingly, there is also a clear, significant difference between second- and first-generation immigrants. Second-generation immigrants had lower trust compared to first-generation immigrants (20.2% versus 32.6%, respectively).

It is also worth noting that trust levels among first-generation immigrants in Denmark appeared to be higher than among their former countrymen in their countries of origin (not shown), lending some support to the general finding shown more convincingly in the aforementioned studies employing cross-national surveys. In this case, the number of respondents was too limited when the first generation was divided into different countries (only 52–96 respondents from each country) and appended to the World Values Survey (WVS). In fact, trust levels were only significantly higher in Denmark in two of the four available cases (Iraq and Turkey; no significant difference for Pakistani and Lebanese respondents; no sample for Ex-Yugoslavia in WVS).

Table 1 proceeds with our first and second hypotheses and lists the results from separate regression models for non-Western immigrants (Model I) and ethnic Danes (Model II). This informs us that for both non-Western immigrants and ethnic Danes, age, education and income are positively correlated with trust. However, the correlations appear substantially smaller for immigrants; they are not significant when all other variables are included (age and education would have been significant in a model with only sociodemographic variables, not shown). Furthermore, left-wing respondents are somewhat more trusting than right-wing respondents in both groups; but again, this is not significant for the immigrants.

Model I illustrates how second-generation immigrants are no longer significantly less trusting than the first-generation immigrants. This is predominantly due to the age control. In a model with the sociodemographic variables, the second-generation dummy becomes insignificant when including age (not shown).

Danes and non-Western immigrants appear quite different when considering the set of variables of theoretical interest. For native Danes, interethnic contact correlates positively with trust, as do perceptions of institutional fairness (the respondents' perceptions regarding fair treatment). The value of adjusted  $R^2$  is much lower in Model I than in Model II, which reflects how many of these variables do not correlate very well with trust for non-Western immigrants. Interestingly, as in the survey of schoolchildren by Dinesen (2012), we find no indication that interethnic contact is associated with trust for immigrants. This also substantiates the meta-review of contact effects by Topp & Pettigrew (2005).

Perceived institutional fairness matters little for trust among immigrants, at least not in the same way. As opposed to the Danes, the perception that institutions treat 'people like me' fairly appears to be substantial and significant for trust, but perceptions of more personal and specific fairness (the index variable) do not correlate with trust. In short, we find some support for the hypothesis that personal experiences matter less for non-Western immigrants. Dinesen (2012) concluded that perceived fairness mattered more for the social trust of immigrants, but this was actually based on an index variable measuring perceived 'collective' fairness towards immigrants in general, much like the '... people like me' variable in this analysis. This suggests that individual experiences or perceptions of individual fairness are less salient than the impression of collective fairness towards ethnic minorities for immigrants. de Vroome, Hooghe & Marien (2013) also concluded that perceptions of collective group discrimination could hinder the development of generalised trust among immigrants.

I tried to confirm the interaction for immigrants between interethnic contact and perceived institutional fairness that was reported by Kumlin & Rothstein (2010). This interaction was far from significant in this case (not shown). Some of the explanation may lie with different country contexts and variables, but the survey populations are also very different. Kumlin & Rothstein (2010) investigated a larger group of non-Nordic immigrants in Sweden, meaning that they also included Western immigrants, often moving due to education or job opportunities. The non-Western immigrants in this survey have come, to Denmark primarily as asylum seekers or through family reunification. Almost all the first-generation immigrants in this survey (89%) had come to Denmark for one of these two reasons.

As regards the second hypothesis, we do find a significant and rather substantial negative correlation between share of lifespan spent in Denmark and social trust, whereas the relationship between trust on the one hand and national identification and proficiency in Danish on the other hand is insignificant. Taken at face value, this suggests that expectations are more important than these two measures of 'acculturation'. However, three things should be noted here. First, as discussed before, 'time' by itself could also indicate other forms of untapped experiences or acculturation. Second, as noted, we lack respondents with proficiency below 'mediocre'. Third, national identification is correlated with trust in a simple bivariate analysis ( $-0.11$ , standardised correlation). Non-Western immigrants who do not feel Danish are less trusting. For immigrants, however, national identification also correlates substantially with the 'institutionalist' variables – satisfaction with democracy and the two measures of perceived fairness – suggesting that identification becomes insignificant primarily due to these variables. We can only speculate on any causality between national belonging and perceptions of institutions. It is interesting to note that identification remains significant for native Danes but in the opposite direction; Danes who feel less Danish are more trusting. This could be interpreted as a very conscious manifestation of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. At least we know that multiculturalism on the individual level is associated with social trust (Bredahl, Holtug & Kongshøj 2017).

Let us continue to the third and final hypothesis in Table 2. Stepwise regression would have revealed how our 'experiential' variables by themselves do not contribute substantially to explaining the trust gap (not shown). Instead, we proceed directly to investigating interactions with ethnicity in Models IV and V. First- and second-generation immigrants have been merged into the same category in the 'ethnicity' dummy, since their trust levels were not

Table 1. Regressions upon generalized trust by ethnicity

	Model I (Non-Western Immigrants)		Model II (Ethnic Danes)	
	Unstandardized coefficients (Std. errors)	Standardized coefficients	Unstandardized coefficients (Std. errors)	Standardized coefficients
Second-generation immigrant	0.08 (0.13)	0.04	-	-
Gender	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.01	-0.03 (0.05)	0.02
Age	0.01 (0.00)	0.10	0.01** (0.00)	0.15*
Personal income	0.02 (0.02)	0.06	0.02 (0.01)	0.09
Education	0.04 (0.03)	0.08	0.06** (0.02)	0.12**
Socio-economic status (ref: employed)				
Self-emp./trainee	-0.06 (0.15)	-0.02	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.01
- Unemployed	0.13 (0.16)	0.05	-0.11 (0.16)	-0.03
- Outside of the labor force	0.06 (0.13)	0.03	-0.01 (0.11)	-0.00
- Student	-0.04 (0.15)	-0.02	0.16 (0.11)	0.07
Ideology	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.06	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.08*
Marital status	-0.18 (0.10)	-0.11	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.03
Neighborhood composition	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.02	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.04
Satisfaction w. democracy	0.07 (0.06)	0.07	0.08 (0.04)	0.08
Institutional fairness	0.01 (0.01)	0.04	0.03*** (0.01)	0.21***
Inst. fairness – “people like me”	0.10* (0.04)	0.14*	0.01 (0.04)	0.01
Associational participation	0.00 (0.08)	0.00	0.04 (0.05)	0.03
Interethnic contact	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.04	0.04** (0.01)	0.10**
Danish identity	0.03 (0.03)	0.04	-0.10** (0.04)	-0.11**
Danish proficiency	0.08 (0.06)	0.09	0.011 (0.06)	0.07
Time spent in Denmark	-0.54* (0.23)	-0.20*	-	-
R <sup>2</sup>	0.101	0.101	0.196	0.196
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.058	0.058	0.175	0.175
N	429	429	715	715

\* = significant at the 0.05-level; \*\* = significant at the 0.01-level; \*\*\* = significant at the 0.001-level

different when accounting for age. We could reasonably argue that the second generation differs from the first generation in terms of socialisation, experiences and expectations, but beyond the simple control for age, no interactions between the variables of theoretical interest here and in the second or first generation could be confirmed when analysing the sample of non-Western immigrants (not shown). While these interactions were far from statistical significance, it should also be considered that we are down to 104 first-generation (and 325 second-generation immigrants) immigrants in all analyses.

In Table 2, we see how the trust gap, while still significant, becomes substantially smaller (almost halved) for respondents with little interethnic contact or negative perceptions of institutions. The two interactions are also depicted graphically in Figures 1 and 2. If contact or perceptions of institutions correlated roughly the same way with trust for both non-Western immigrants and Danes, we could imagine how the general trust gap would have been much smaller.

We can discuss whether these observations, especially when depicted graphically, offer opportunity for an 'experiential' explanation.

Table 2. Trust gap between ethnic Danes and non-Western immigrants with interactions

	Model III		Model IV	Model V
	Unstandardized coeff. (std. errors)	Standardized coeff.	Unstandardized coeff. (std. errors)	Unstandardized coeff.
Non-Western immigrant (1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation)	-0.65*** (0.07)	-0.41***	-0.36** (0.14)	-0.35* (0.15)
Gender	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.03	0.03 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)
Age	0.01** (0.00)	0.12**	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Personal income	0.02* (0.01)	0.08*	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Education	0.06*** (0.02)	0.11***	0.06*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)
Socio-economic status (ref: employed)				
Self-emp./trainee	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.00	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.09)
- Unemployed	0.06 (0.11)	0.02	0.06 (0.11)	0.07 (0.11)
- Outside of the labor force	0.02 (0.09)	0.01	0.02 (0.09)	0.04 (0.09)
- Student	0.10 (0.09)	0.04	0.09 (0.09)	0.10 (0.09)
Ideology	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.08**	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
Marital status	-0.09 (0.05)	-0.06	-0.09 (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)
Neighborhood composition	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02	0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
Satisfaction w. democracy	0.09* (0.04)	0.08*	0.08* (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)
Institutional fairness	0.01** (0.00)	0.09**	0.01* (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)
Inst. fairness – “people like me”	0.05 (0.03)	0.06	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Associational participation	0.05 (0.04)	0.03	0.04 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)
Interethnic contact	0.02 (0.01)	0.06	0.04** (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Danish identity	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.05	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)



Continued Table 2. Trust gap between ethnic Danes and non-Western immigrants with interactions

	Model III		Model IV	Model V
	Unstandardized coeff. (std. errors)	Standardized coeff.	Unstandardized coeff. (std. errors)	Unstandardized coeff.
Danish proficiency	0.07 (0.05)	0.07	0.09 (0.05)	0.08 (0.05)
Time spent in Denmark	-0.40* (0.17)	-0.12*	-0.39* (0.17)	-0.44** (0.17)
Non-Western imm. x interethnic contact			-0.06** (0.02)	
Non-Western imm. x institutional fairness				-0.02* (0.01)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.255	0.255	0.261	0.260
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.242	0.242	0.247	0.246
N	1144	1144	1144	1144

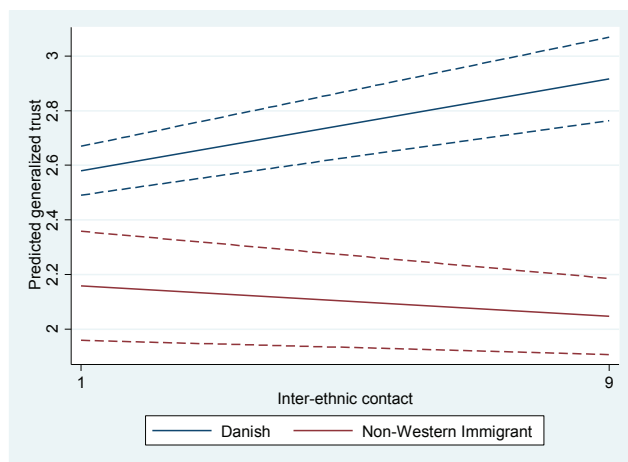


Figure 1. Interaction between ethnicity and interethnic contact  
Predicted relationship between contact and trust by ethnicity (Model IV)  
with 95% confidence intervals

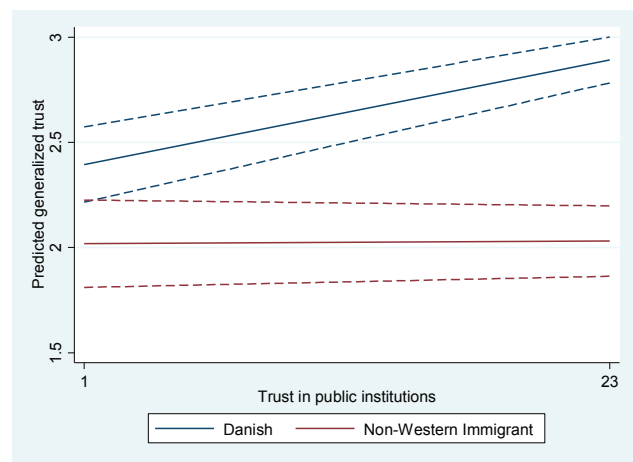


Figure 2. Interaction between ethnicity and trust in public institutions  
Predicted relationship between institutional fairness and trust by ethnicity  
(Model V) with 95% confidence intervals

For instance, contact may be characterised by status differences or inequality for the non-Western immigrants (referring to the earlier theoretical discussion on 'optimal' contact), even when frequency of contact in personal homes is high; the literature had discussed whether perceived discrimination mitigates the positive effects of contact for minorities, although Thomsen & Rafiqi (2016) had also substantiated that we know little about whether this is actually the case.

The same can be discussed regarding the interaction with perceived institutional fairness, meaning that even non-Western immigrants who perceive public institutions to be fair in the procedural sense perceive that personal experiences with representatives from these institutions may be marred by status differences or other forms of relational asymmetry.

An alternative explanation for both interactions could be that group identity (rather than personal experiences) can be more salient or dominant for immigrants and minorities (Verkuyten & Martinovic

2016). As mentioned previously, this can be echoed by the finding that perceived institutional fairness towards 'people like me' was significant for immigrants (but not for ethnic Danes), although we could not confirm this difference with a proper interaction term.

## Conclusion

This article has set out to investigate differences between non-Western immigrants and ethnic Danes regarding sources of generalised trust and to explain the gap in levels of trust across this ethnic divide. This article is the first to simultaneously show interactions between ethnicity and both perceived institutional fairness and interethnic contact in addition to demonstrating the role of time spent in the new context.

We can confirm that: 1) often-discussed measures such as interethnic contact or perceived institutional fairness towards the individual matter less for immigrants than for Danes, 2) the share of lifespan spent in Denmark correlates negatively with social trust for immigrants, whereas national identification and language proficiency could not be determined to play a significant role and 3) the trust gap can only be substantially explained when the interaction between ethnicity and our two experiential measures is taken into account. In our appraisal of these results, we should remember the endogeneity issues typical of most trust research. In this case, it specifically means that we have good reason to discuss issues of potential self-selection or reciprocal causality with trust regarding both contact and national identification, whereas previous research or common sense did not raise the same issues with perceptions of institutions or time spent in Denmark.

Taken together and following the hypotheses, the results indicate that expectations based on perceptions of the current context – as opposed to distinctly personal experiences or ‘culture’ – are particularly important for understanding social trust among non-Western immigrants. Low expectations mean that recent arrivals exhibit relatively high levels of social trust. Furthermore, perceived fairness toward ‘... people like me’ matters rather than fairness towards individuals themselves. Perceived group discrimination can only be a personal experience to a limited extent and must to some extent reflect more general perceptions and expectations.

The findings suggest more clearly than in previous research, generalised trust among immigrants was based on general expectations and perceptions beyond personal experiences. However, lower trust among immigrants who have spent more of their lives in Denmark could also be seen as an indication of negative outcomes in the ‘acculturation’ process or as a reflection of negative experiences beyond what has been included in the present analysis. We have also seen how the trust gap between ethnicities is much less for those with relatively little interethnic contact or negative

perceptions of institutional fairness. This might possibly indicate that the experiences that immigrants have in these arenas can be improved. For instance, we might discuss whether immigrants who engage in interethnic contact or who perceive institutions to be procedurally fair nevertheless still experience status inequality or other forms of relational asymmetry in these arenas of interaction.

However, improving expectations and perceptions certainly does not preclude improving experiences or vice-versa. Regardless of the theoretical interpretations, the findings support that trust is certainly subject to dynamic changes as immigrants settle into a new context and also that the acculturation process in this case has not led to natives and immigrants simply becoming more alike over time.

**Kristian Kongshøj** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies, Aalborg University. He works on issues related to national identity/community conceptions, citizenship, diversity and social cohesion within the auspices of the research project ‘The Politics of Social Cohesion’. He also conducts research on welfare state change, and his PhD was entitled ‘Social Citizenship in China and the Nordic Countries: Amorphous Welfare States and their Normative Foundations’.

## Note

1. An invitation containing access and the password for the Internet questionnaire was sent out via conventional post. If there had been no response within a few weeks, contact via the telephone was attempted. In all, 68% ethnic Danes and 54% immigrants responded via the Internet. The remaining responses were collected over phone.

## Appendix

Table A1. Independent variables

Phrasing	Coding
<p>“How much do you trust that you will get a fair and reasonable treatment by...”</p> <p>1) “...the public administration, for instance caseworkers in municipalities?”</p> <p>2) “...the police?”</p> <p>3) “...the courts?”</p>	<p>0–10</p> <p>(0 = “No trust at all,” 10 = “Very high trust”)</p> <p>(Index scale of all three variables: 1–23; not 0–30 scale since very few respondents placed themselves in the 7 bottom categories, so they were all re-coded as “1”)</p>
<p>“In your opinion, how often does it happen that people like you are treated fairly by public authorities? For instance tax, health or social authorities, or the police.”</p>	<p>1–5</p> <p>(1 = “Almost never,” 5 = “Almost always”)</p>
<p>“All in all, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Denmark?”</p>	<p>1–4</p> <p>(1 = “Not at all satisfied,” 5 = “Very satisfied”)</p>
<p>“How much are you in contact with people of Danish background [immigrants]/people of an ethnic background different from yourself [Danes]:</p> <p>1) “...in their homes?”</p> <p>2) “...in your own home?”.</p>	<p>1–5</p> <p>(1 = “Never,” 5 = “Very often”)</p> <p>(Index scale of both variables: 1–9)</p>

Continued Table A1. Independent variables

Phrasing	Coding
"Do you participate in voluntary work in an association?"	1 = "No," 2 = "Yes"
"Are there more people of Danish background or more people of foreign background in the local area where you live?"	1–5 (Danes: 1 = "People almost exclusively of Danish background," 5 = "People of almost exclusively foreign background") (reverse coding for non-Western immigrants)
"How proud of being Danish are you?"	1–5: (1 = "I do not feel as a Dane," 5 = "Very proud")
"When did you first move to Denmark?"	Year (Re-coded as share of lifespan in years spent in Denmark for first-generation immigrants (0–1); Ethnic Danes and second-generation set as "1")
"How would you describe your proficiency in Danish?"	1–5: (1 = "Very bad," 5 = "Very good")
"In politics you often distinguish between left and right. Where would you generally place your viewpoints on such a scale, where 0 is furthest to the left, 5 is in the middle, and 10 is furthest to the right?"	0–10 (0 = "Furthest to the left," 10 = "Furthest to the right")
Socio-demographic control variables	
Age in years	18–60
Gender	1 = Man, 2 = Woman
Personal gross income (monthly)	1–10 (1 = Below DKK 10,000, 2 = More than DKK 50,000)
Educational attainment	1–5 (none beyond school/professional/short further education/medium further/long further education)
Main occupation	Re-coded into five dummies with ref. = "Wage earner": 1 = "Self-employed" or "Trainee" 1 = "Unemployed" 1 = "Outside the labor force" (Early retirement/ Disability pensioner/Housewife) 1 = "Student"
Marital status	1–2 (1 = Divorced, widower or never married, 2 = Married or civil partnership)

Table A2: Descriptives

	Ethnic Danes (N=715)		Non-Western immigrants (N=428)	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Generalized trust (1-4)	2,69	0,68	2,07	0,79
Gender (1-2)	1,52	0,50	1,45	0,50
Age (18-60)	42,17	11,80	36,64	12,04
Personal income (1-10)	5,14	2,72	3,25	2,21
Education (1-5)	2,92	1,36	2,52	1,48
Unemployed (0-1)	0,03	0,17	0,09	0,29
Out of labor force (0-1)	0,07	0,25	0,13	0,34
Self-emp./trainee (0-1)	0,10	0,30	0,09	0,29
Student (0-1)	0,10	0,30	0,19	0,40
Ideology (0-10)	5,15	2,56	4,62	2,41
Marital status (1-2)	1,53	0,50	1,61	0,49
Neighborhood composition (1-5)	1,77	0,67	3,76	0,95
Satisfaction w. democracy (1-4)	2,85	0,70	2,95	0,79
Institutional fairness (1-23)	15,03	5,30	13,85	5,93
Inst. fairness – "people like me" (1-5)	4,27	0,97	4,01	10,39
Associational participation (1-2)	1,40	0,49	1,28	0,45
Interethnic contact (1-9)	3,22	1,97	5,91	2,30
Danish identity (1-5)	4,27	0,73	3,68	1,33
Danish proficiency (1-5)	4,88	0,41	4,26	0,92
Time spent in Denmark (0-1)	1,00	0,00	0,66	0,28

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